

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application. By the present amendment, claims 2, 4-6, 10-12, 16, 17, 19-21, 23 and 28-30 have been amended, claim 22 has been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer as to the subject matter contained therein and new claims 36 and 37 have been added.

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (*Canceled*).

Claim 2 (*Currently Amended*): The magnetic resonance imaging system of claim 21, wherein the predetermined direction is a longitudinal direction of the couch, positions of the plurality of RF coils in the predetermined direction are fixed to a position of the couch, and the position changing unit is configured to move a position of the couch in the longitudinal direction relative to the fixed magnet.

Claim 3 (*Previously Presented*): The magnetic resonance imaging system of claim 2, wherein the position changing unit is configured to change the position so that a center position of each of the plurality of RF coils in the longitudinal direction corresponds to the uniform region of the static magnetic field.

Claim 4 (*Currently Amended*): The magnetic resonance imaging system of claim 3, wherein the reception processing unit comprises selection means for automatically selecting, from the echo signals received by each of the plurality of RF coils, the echo signal received by a certain RF coil located at ~~the~~ a center of the uniform region in the longitudinal direction, an output of the selection means being routed to the image producing unit.

Claim 5 (*Currently Amended*): The magnetic resonance imaging system of claim 4, wherein the selection means comprises:

signal level detecting means for detecting a level of the echo signal received by each of the plurality of RF coils; and

signal selecting means for automatically selecting the echo signal received by the RF coil ~~member~~ located at the center of the uniform region in the longitudinal direction based on changes in the level of the echo signal detected by the signal level detecting means.

Claim 6 (*Currently Amended*): The magnetic resonance imaging system of claim 3, further comprising

an identification generating unit configured to generate an identification number ~~inherent to~~ of each RF coil, the identification generating unit being disposed at each of the plurality of RF coils,

a size memorizing unit configured to memorize a size of each of the plurality of RF coils in the longitudinal direction, the size corresponding to the identification number of each RF coil generated by the ID generating unit,

a disposal detecting unit configured to identify each signal line of the plurality of RF coils so as to detect a disposal state of the plurality of RF coils in the longitudinal direction, and

a determination unit configured to determine the size based on detection information about the coil disposal state detected by the disposal detecting unit and providing the size to the size memorizing unit, wherein

the position changing unit includes means for moving the position of the couch based on the size determined by the determination unit, and

the reception unit comprising selection means for automatically selecting, from the echo signal received by each of the plurality of RF coils, an echo signal received by the RF coil located at ~~the~~ a center of the uniform region in the longitudinal direction on the basis of the size determined by the determination unit and the coil disposal state detected by the disposal detecting unit, the detected echo signal being provided to the image producing unit.

Claim 7 (*Previously Presented*): The magnetic resonance imaging system of claim 2, wherein:

the position changing unit comprises means for changing the position so that, of the plurality of RF coils constituting the multiple RF coil, an overlapped region of sensitivity distribution regions of any two RF coils which are mutually-adjointing corresponds with the uniform region of the static magnetic field in the longitudinal direction and the position changing unit moving the couch step by step by a distance corresponding to each RF coil in the longitudinal direction, and

the image producing unit comprises means for performing unfolding processing on a set of echo data obtained by the reception processing unit at every position of the couch changed by the position changing unit on the basis of different sensitivity distributions of the plurality of RF coils.

Claim 8 (*Previously Presented*): The magnetic resonance imaging system of claim 21, wherein each of the plurality of RF coils comprising the multiple RF coil is an array type of RF coil having a plurality of coil elements.

Claim 9 (*Previously Presented*): The magnetic resonance imaging system of claim 21, wherein each of the plurality of coil members comprising the multiple RF coil is a whole-body coil.

Claim 10 (*Currently Amended*): The magnetic resonance imaging system of claim 24 ~~2~~, wherein the multiple RF coil is fixed to one of the object or the couch.

Claim 11 (*Currently Amended*): A magnetic resonance imaging system comprising:

static magnetic field generating means for generating a static magnetic field containing a uniform region whose magnetic intensity is uniform;

a couch movable in a predetermined direction passing through the static magnetic field, an object to be imaged being laid on the couch;

a reception RF coil arranged fixedly to the static magnetic field generating means;

position changing means for automatically changing a relative position between the couch and the static magnetic field generating means in the predetermined direction when the object is under imaging;

scanning means for scanning the object by transmitting an RF pulse to the object at ~~each position~~ different positions of the couch with respect to the static magnetic field generating means, the different positions ~~determined~~ changed by the position changing means, the scanning including an imaging scan and a measuring scan ~~carried out for a~~ to determine sensitivity ~~distribution~~ distributions of the reception MR coil at the different positions;

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reception means for receiving through the reception RF coil an echo signal in response to the scanning performed by the scanning means;

reception-processing means for processing the echo signal received by the reception means into echo data;

image producing means for producing an MR image images from the echo data obtained in response ~~responsive~~ to the imaging scan at ~~each position~~ different positions of the couch changed by the position changing means; and

unfolding performing means for unfolding the MR image produced in response to ~~each position~~ different positions of the couch using the echo data of the sensitivity ~~distribution~~ distributions obtained at ~~each position~~ different positions of the couch ~~changed~~ determined by the position changing means.

Claim 12 (*Currently Amended*): The magnetic resonance imaging system of claim 20 ~~37~~, wherein the reception RF coil is one in number.

Claim 13 (*Previously Presented*): The magnetic resonance imaging system of claim 12, wherein the reception RF coil is a whole-body coil used for both the transmission of the RF pulse and the reception of the echo data.

Claim 14 (*Canceled*).

Claim 15 (*Previously Presented*): The magnetic resonance imaging system of claim 13, wherein the position changing unit is configured to move the couch every half of a length of the reception RF coil in the predetermined direction.

Claim 16 (*Currently Amended*): The magnetic resonance imaging system of claim ~~20~~ 37, wherein the position changing unit configured to move the couch to a first couch position and a second couch position, a region to be imaged of the object located at the first couch position being shifted in part from a sensitivity distribution region of the reception RF coil; and the region located at the second couch position with the region being contained entirely in the sensitivity distribution region of the reception RF coil,

the system further including an instruction unit configured to instruct a contrast agent to be injected into the object when the couch is located at the second position.

Claim 17 (*Currently Amended*): The magnetic resonance imaging system of claim 16, wherein:

the measuring scan is comprised of both a first sensitivity-distribution measuring scan for measuring a sensitivity distribution of the reception RF coil carried out when the couch is located at the first couch position and a second sensitivity-distribution measuring scan for measuring a sensitivity distribution of

the reception RF coil carried out when the couch is located at the second couch position;

the imaging scan comprising both a first imaging scan for obtaining the MR ~~image~~ images of the region carried out when the couch is located at the first couch position and a plurality of second imaging scans for obtaining the MR ~~image~~ images of the region carried out when the couch is located at the second couch position;

the image producing unit is configured to reconstruct the echo data obtained by both of the first and second imaging scans into image data; and

the unfolding unit is configured to unfold the image data obtained through each of the second imaging scans using both the echo data obtained through the first and second sensitivity-distribution measuring scans and the image data obtained through the first imaging scan.

Claim 18 (*Original*): The magnetic resonance imaging system of claim 16, wherein the reception coil is one in number.

Claim 19 (*Currently Amended*): An MR imaging method of obtaining an MR image of an object based on a sub-encoding technique (fast imaging technique) using a reception RF coil, the object being laid on a couch, the method comprising the steps of:

acquiring echo data for coil sensitivity distributions of the reception RF coil and echo data for imaging at each of a plurality of positions of the couch, each said position being mutually different in positional relationships between a region to be imaged of the object and the reception RF coil, the couch being moved from one position to another when each acquisition at one position is completed;

producing the echo data for imaging into ~~an image~~ images; and

unfolding the ~~image~~ images acquired in response to each ~~position of~~ different positions of the object using the data of the coil sensitivity distributions.

Claim 20 (*Currently Amended*): A magnetic resonance imaging system comprising:

a magnet configured to generate a static magnetic field containing a uniform region whose magnetic intensity is uniform;

a couch movable in a predetermined direction passing through the static magnetic field, an object to be imaged being laid on the couch;

a reception RF coil arranged fixedly to the magnet;

a position changing unit configured to automatically change a relative position between the couch and the magnet in the predetermined direction when the object is under imaging;

a scanning unit configured to ~~scan~~ perform scans with the object by transmitting an RF pulse to the object at ~~each position~~ different positions of the

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couch with respect to the magnet, and configured to perform the scans including
an imaging scan and a measuring scan to determine a sensitivity distributions
distribution of the reception MR coil at the different positions;

a reception unit configured to receive through the reception RF coil an echo
signal responsive to the scanning and to process the echo signal to obtain echo
data;

an image producing unit configured to produce an MR images image from
the echo data obtained in response to the imaging scan at ~~each position~~ different
positions of the couch; and

an unfolding unit configured to unfold the MR image produced in response
to ~~each position~~ different positions of the couch using the echo data of the
sensitivity distributions ~~distribution~~ obtained at ~~each position~~ different positions of
the couch.

Claim 21 (*Currently Amended*): The magnetic resonance imaging system
of claim 20 37, wherein the reception RF coil comprises a plurality of RF coils
constituting a multiple RF coil.

Claim 22 (*Canceled*).

Claim 23 (*Currently Amended*): A magnetic resonance imaging system comprising:

a magnet configured to generate a static magnetic field containing a uniform region whose magnetic intensity is uniform;

a couch movable in a longitudinal direction passing through the static magnetic field, an object to be imaged being laid on the couch;

a reception multiple RF coil including a plurality of coil members positioned around the object;

a position changing unit configured to automatically change a relative position of the couch with respect to the magnet in the longitudinal direction based on a length of each of the plurality of coil members in the longitudinal direction when the object is under imaging;

a scanning unit configured to scan the object by applying a given train of pulses to the object at ~~each position~~ different positions determined by the position changing unit;

a reception unit configured to receive through the multiple RF coil an echo signal in response to the train of pulses applied by the scanning unit;

a reception-processing unit comprising a selection element configured to automatically select, from the echo signals received individually by the plurality of coil elements, the echo signal received by a ~~certain~~ coil member located at the a

center of the uniform region in the longitudinal direction and a processing element configured to process the selected echo signal into echo data; and

an image producing unit configured to produce an MR image based on the echo data processed by the reception-processing unit.

Claim 24 (*Previously Presented*): The magnetic resonance imaging system of claim 23, wherein the position changing unit is configured to change the position of the couch so that a center position of each of the plurality of coil members in the longitudinal direction corresponds to the uniform region of the static magnetic field.

Claim 25 (*Previously Presented*): The magnetic resonance imaging system of claim 23, wherein the selection element comprises:

signal level detecting means for detecting a level of the echo signal received by each of the plurality of coil members; and

signal selecting means for automatically selecting the echo signal received by the coil member located at the center of the uniform region in the longitudinal direction based on changes in a level of the echo signal detected by the signal level detecting means.

Claim 26 (*Previously Presented*): The magnetic resonance imaging system of claim 23, wherein each of the plurality of coil members comprising the multiple RF coil is an array type of RF coil comprising a plurality of coil elements.

Claim 27 (*Previously Presented*): The magnetic resonance imaging system of claim 23, wherein each of the plurality of coil members comprising the multiple RF coil is a whole-body coil.

Claim 28 (*Currently Amended*): The magnetic resonance imaging system of claim 23, wherein the multiple RF coil is fixed to at ~~least~~ one of the object or the couch.

Claim 29 (*Currently Amended*): A magnetic resonance imaging system comprising:

a magnet configured to generate a static magnetic field containing a uniform region whose magnetic intensity is uniform;

a couch movable in a longitudinal direction ~~thereof~~ passing through the static magnetic field, an object to be imaged being laid on the couch;

a reception multiple RF coil including a plurality of coil members positioned around the object;

a position changing unit configured to automatically change a relative position of the couch with respect to the magnet in the longitudinal direction in accordance with a length of each of the plurality of coil members in the longitudinal direction when the object is under imaging;

a scanning unit configured to scan the object by applying a given train of pulses to the object at ~~each position~~ different positions determined by the position changing unit;

a reception unit configured to receive through the multiple RF coil an echo signal in response to the train of pulses applied by the scanning unit;

a reception-processing unit comprising a selection element configured to automatically select, from the echo signals received individually by the plurality of coil elements, the echo signal received by a coil member located at a center of the uniform region in the longitudinal direction and a processing element configured to process the selected echo signal into echo data; and

an image producing unit configured to produce an MR image based on the echo data processed by the reception-processing unit.

Claim 30 (*Currently Amended*): A magnetic resonance imaging system comprising:

a magnet configured to generate a static magnetic field containing a uniform region whose magnetic intensity is uniform;

a couch movable in a longitudinal direction passing through the static magnetic field, an object to be imaged being laid on the couch;

a reception multiple RF coil including a plurality of coil members positioned around the object;

an identification generating unit configured to generate an identification number of each coil member, the identification generating unit being disposed at each of the plurality of coil members,

a size memorizing unit configured to memorize a size of each of the plurality of coil members in the longitudinal direction, the size corresponding to the identification number of each coil member generated by the identification generating unit,

a disposal detecting unit configured to identify each signal line of the plurality of coil members to detect a disposal state of the plurality of coil members in the longitudinal direction;

a determination unit configured to determine the size of each coil by referencing detection information about the coil disposal state detected by the disposal detecting unit to the size memorizing unit;

a position changing unit configured to automatically change a relative position of the couch with respect to the magnet in the longitudinal direction in accordance with both of a length of each of the plurality of coil members in the

longitudinal direction and the size determined by the determination unit when the object is under imaging;

a scanning unit configured to scan the object by applying a given train of pulses to the object at ~~each position~~ different positions determined by the position changing unit;

a reception unit configured to receive through the multiple RF coil an echo signal in response to the train of pulses applied by the scanning unit;

a reception-processing unit comprising a selection element configured to automatically select, from the echo signal received by each of the plurality of coil members, an echo signal received by the coil member located at ~~the~~ a center of the uniform region in the longitudinal direction based on both the size determined by the determination unit and the coil disposal state detected by the disposal detecting unit, and a processing element configured to process the selected echo signal into echo data; and

an image producing unit configured to produce an MR image based on the echo data from the reception-processing unit.

Claim 31 (*Previously Presented*): The magnetic resonance imaging system of claim 30, wherein the position changing unit is configured to change the position of the couch so that a center position of each of the plurality of coil

members in the longitudinal direction corresponds to the uniform region of the static magnetic field.

Claim 32 (*Previously Presented*): The magnetic resonance imaging system of claim 30, wherein the selection element comprises:

signal level detecting means for detecting a level of the echo signal received by each of the plurality of coil members; and

signal selecting means for automatically selecting the echo signal received by the coil member located at the center of the uniform region in the longitudinal direction based on changes in the level of the echo signal detected by the signal level detecting means.

Claim 33 (*Previously Presented*): The magnetic resonance imaging system of claim 30, wherein each of the plurality of coil members comprising the multiple RF coil is an array type of RF coil comprising a plurality of coil elements.

Claim 34 (*Previously Presented*): The magnetic resonance imaging system of claim 30, wherein each of the plurality of coil members comprising the multiple RF coil is a whole-body coil.

Claim 35 (*Previously Presented*): The magnetic resonance imaging system of claim 30, wherein the multiple RF coil is fixed to at least one of the object or the couch.

Claim 36 (*New*): A magnetic resonance imaging system comprising:

- static magnetic field generating means for generating a static magnetic field containing a uniform region whose magnetic intensity is uniform;
- a couch movable in a predetermined direction passing through the static magnetic field, an object to be imaged being laid on the couch;
- a reception RF coil;
- position changing means for automatically changing both of a relative position between the couch and the static magnetic field generating means and a relative position between the RF reception coil and the couch in the predetermined direction;
- scanning means for scanning the same region of the object by transmitting an RF pulse to the object at different positions of the couch with respect to the RF reception coil, the scanning including an imaging scan and a measuring scan to determine sensitivity distributions of the reception RF coil at the different positions of the couch;

reception means for receiving through the reception RF coil an echo signal emanated from the same scanned region of the object in response to the scanning performed by the scanning means;

reception-processing means for processing the echo signal received by the reception means into echo data;

image producing means for producing MR images from the echo data obtained in response to the imaging scan at the different positions of the couch; and

unfolding performing means for unfolding the MR images produced in response to the different positions of the couch, using the echo data of the sensitivity distributions obtained at the different positions of the couch.

Claim 37 (*New*): A magnetic resonance imaging system comprising:

a magnet configured to generate a static magnetic field containing a uniform region whose magnetic intensity is uniform;

a couch movable in a predetermined direction passing through the static magnetic field, an object to be imaged being laid on the couch;

a reception RF coil;

a position changing unit configured to automatically change both of a relative position between the couch and the magnet and a relative position between the RF reception coil and the couch in the predetermined direction;

a scanning unit configured to perform scans at the same region of the object by transmitting an RF pulse to the object at different positions of the couch with respect to the RF reception coil, the scans including an imaging scan and a measuring scan to determine sensitivity distributions of the reception RF coil at the different positions of the couch;

a reception unit configured to receive through the reception RF coil an echo signal emanated from the same scanned region of the object in response to the scanning and to process the echo signal to obtain echo data;

an image producing unit configured to produce MR signals from the echo data obtained in response to the imaging scan at the different positions of the couch; and

an unfolding unit configured to unfold the MR images produced in response to the different positions of the couch using the echo data of the sensitivity distributions obtained at the different positions of the couch.